

Feb. 16, 1945
Germany

Darling,

I'll start this note even though I will have to interrupt it in a minute to go to lunch.

Last night I was too tired to write. We had only one case, but it was a long, exacting one, taking almost five hours. The missile entered the back, slanted upwards, came out the shoulder, and then blew off the entire chin & lower jaw. Anaesthesia and maintaining an airway was difficult but we accomplished it, after a few tense minutes when he almost choked to death. I sewed up what was left of his face as best I could; then fixed his chest wall, and ended up with a trachiotomy. These wounds, mutilating the face, together with the ones severing the spinal cord, are the most terrible ones of all to me. A man's face is so much a part of him! Plastic surgery will help, but it will never be very good. This boy, about 19 years old, was obviously very good-looking before. It seems like such a terrible price to pay. These things always depress me. One can never get used to it!

As I write, the big guns which are placed close by go off from time to time; and then the windows rattle and shake. I hope the morning isn't far off when their roar will be continuous, and the big jump-off will have begun.

Today, for the first day in 10, I actually feel that life may be worth living. I can actually hear what people are saying, too. This particular seige of the "crud" has been a long one, and I shall be glad when I am rid of it entirely.

The news from the Pacific today is colossal. Our carrier planes are bombing Tokyo, and our fleet is sailing arrogantly in their home waters, daring them to come out and fight. What a Navy! Maybe the day isn't far off when we'll be hopping up the Bonin's toward the Jap mainland itself! Meanwhile, our air force continues to give the Boche a blasting, and the Russians haven't been stopped yet by a long shot. If only the weather would give us a break on the ground!

I am hoping that a letter will come soon telling of Henny's birthday. Six year old - or is it seven? Gosh how they're growing up!

I am reading Catherine Bowen's "Yankee from Olympus" - a biography of O. W. Holmes, Jr. A very understanding and interesting story of a man and his times. Judge Holmes was surely a great man. You'd like it.

Lots of love, my darling. It can't last forever.

Longingly.

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P.S. Haven't had any more brain-storms about a title for the letters. Perhaps "Darkling Plain" is too scholarly. The variety of the subject matter makes a descriptive title difficult - a little medicine, a little adventure, a little philosophy - only being together by the fact that they are all letters from one guy, and he a doctor. I suppose, therefore, your idea of a title like "A Doctor in War" or "A Surgeon in War" is the best. Perhaps - "Even Doctors Must Fight"? Oh, well, call 'em anything you want. I don't think anybody will want to publish them anyhow.

Besides, I love you.